

Subject: Checks & Balances: Affordability, Accountability ... and a Season of Renewal

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Happy Passover ... and Happy Easter

Whatever tradition you celebrate, spring is a time of renewal and reflection.



Wishing you and yours a very joyous Passover, happy Easter and bright springtime.



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Borrowing for -- Not Against -- the Future

Bonds are often a great way to finance public infrastructure improvements -- but not to pay off legal claims. That's the message I sent to the L.A. City Council, which is seeking to fill a budget gap caused by spiraling legal claims with a \$60 million bond measure. Payouts for legal claims against the City are expected to reach \$135 million this year, which is above the \$110 million the City paid last year and well in excess of the \$68.4 million the City budgeted for liability payments this year. That said, I oppose the proposed judgment obligation bonds, which carry \$20 million in interest payments. Instead, the City needs to work on better managing its risks to minimize legal costs, and look for alternatives to costly borrowing plans to cover all but the most exceptional circumstances. I'll continue to advocate for the Mayor and the City Council to be prudent.

[Read the LA Times article here](#)

Financial Literacy Needn't Be a Taxing Proposition

Let's be honest: Most all of us don't enjoy doing our taxes. But some professional advice and financial literacy can be incredibly valuable for saving money and managing your personal

finances. That's why as part of my Financial Planning Program, I sponsored a tax preparation workshop in partnership with City Council President Herb Wesson and Councilmember Marqueece Harris-Dawson in Council District 8. We were joined by numerous community groups and agencies, including the Empowerment Congress Southwest Neighborhood Development Council, the Financial Planning Association, the nonprofit financial coaching service BALANCE, the Children's Collective -- Family Source Center, the Watts Labor Community Action Committee -- Family Source Center and the Los Angeles Housing & Community Investment Department. Thanks to everyone who made the event a success!

Also, [check out my op-ed](#) on financial literacy in the Sentinel.



With L.A. Council President Herb Wesson and longtime community leader Olivia Mitchell.

Demanding Greater Safety and Accountability From SoCalGas

Last year, I called for stronger oversight of Sempra / SoCalGas following the massive gas leak at Aliso Canyon. I am pleased to report that in a unanimous vote, the City Council adopted our recommendations. We also called on the City to negotiate a new franchise agreement with the utility that would ensure that we recover the actual cost of damage to roadways from street cuts and any other fees to which we're entitled. And, we recommended a compliance program to evaluate safety and environmental protections.

[Read the audit here](#)

How Do We Get More Affordable Housing?

Our shortage of affordable housing in California -- and L.A. in particular -- needs fixing. And the only real solution to the demand for more affordable housing is to increase its supply. I shared my views recently on how to address California's high housing costs at a panel discussion sponsored by the Center for California Real Estate, which is an institute of the California Association of Realtors. Among the ways to do that is for our City to update its community plans, be more transparent, be less bureaucratic and engage communities in the process. My office is also following up to get the City to implement recommendations in my office's recent audit of density bonus incentives for low-income housing -- and how key improvements can help increase the supply of much-needed

affordable housing.



Stopping a *Training Wreck*

The Department of Water & Power spends about \$40 million a year on apprenticeship programs to train the next generation of workers. Yet in my latest audit, we found that these expensive training programs fall short of expectations -- in one program, the graduation rate was just 43%. Moreover, the DWP loses its investment in apprentices -- which ranges from a staggering \$440,000 to \$665,000 per graduate -- when they take their experience and training to private utilities. Seventeen of 32 graduating electric distribution mechanic trainees left for other utilities in the past 22 months. We recommended partnerships with labor and the L.A. Trade Technical College to expand feeder programs that lead to apprenticeships, as well as better monitoring of outcomes. DWP reports it plans to act on our recommendations. I intend to watch that this training wreck be put back on track.

[Read the audit here](#)

[Read the LA Times article here](#)

Coming Together

What I find so meaningful about my job is that being Controller is about so much more than just the finances of our City. It's about being a part of the civic fabric and incredible diversity that makes L.A. so great.

In the past month, I've had the privilege of coming together with priests, pastors, rabbis, cantors, imams, monks and others to affirm our values as a pluralistic, tolerant society -- and to speak for and seek inclusion, respect and unity. We came together at some incredible events at the multi-faith Pico Union Project, at an interfaith service at Mt. Sinai Memorial Park and a unity march starting at Wilshire Boulevard Temple, then stopping at two churches and concluding at the Islamic Center of Southern California. And, in Westwood and in City hall we celebrated the Persian new year festival of Nowruz. Our diversity is our strength.



Food for the Stomach ... and the Mind

Our morning speaker series, Data + Donuts, provides much-needed networking and collaborative opportunities for City and County staffers. Our next event will be on Wednesday, April 19, and will feature guest speaker Wendy Hsu, from the Department of Cultural Affairs. More information and RSVP here: <https://compilerla.github.io/data-donuts/event/data-donuts-03.html>



Spend a Summer in My Office

My office is hiring summer interns! If you know a civic-minded college or grad school student who is interested in learning about local government and making a difference, please share this link: lacontroller.org/careers.

SUMMER 2017 | MAY-AUGUST

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Los Angeles City Controller

As always, I welcome your thoughts and feedback. Feel free to reply to this email, leave a [comment on the website](#) or on [Facebook](#).



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